Muḥammad and the Golden Bough

Reconstructing Arabian Myth

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PREFACE

■ Myth as a constituent of Arab-Islamic culture has long been ignored or even denied. Prodded, indeed, irked, by this stance exhibited by scholarship on the one hand and by a dogmatic theology or ideology on the other, I attempt in this study, first of all, to demonstrate the existence of a culture-specific, coherent pre-Islamic Arabian myth—which deserves to be qualified as autochthonous—and, further, to engage that Arabian myth in the dynamism of subsequent Islamic myth-building and mythopoesis. The study first identifies as an autochthonous Arab-Islamic myth Muḥammad's unearthing of a golden bough from the grave of the last survivor of the divine scourge that destroyed the ancient race of the Thamūd. It then proceeds to establish a ground of comparison between this myth and the literary and religious traditions contained in kindred structures and symbolic systems that range from Gilgamesh and the Hebrew Bible to Homer and Vergil. On its concrete, traceable level, this study thus intends to introduce the corpus of largely unrecognized Arabian myth into the purview of a much broader comparative world of myth and symbol.

As its starting point the study takes an incident in the biography of the Prophet Muḥammad, in which, in the course of his raid against the Byzantine outpost in Northern Arabia, Tabūk, he discovered a bough of gold. It was unearthed from the grave of the last survivor of the Thamūd, an ancient Arabian people who once had prospered in their rock city of al-Ḥijr. The history of the Thamūd—apart from their myth—we can actually follow from as far back as the eighth century B.C. to the threshold (fourth/fifth century A.D.) of the Byzantine period. Myth and repeated qur'ānic notices, however, tell us that at a historically unspecified time they were smitten by a divine scourge for their iniquity and for having defied their prophet, Ṣāliḥ, and that their ultimate destruction was precipitated by their supreme abomination, the slaying of the

Divine She-Camel, known in myth more commonly as the She-Camel of Ṣāliḥ. In a direct way, Arabian myth makes Qudār, the "marked" champion of the Thamūd, the tragic perpetrator of this fateful abomination. Under the byname of Abū Righāl, this Qudār is then also identified as the one who was buried together with the golden bough of the Thamūd.

Various directions of inquiry have made possible the reconstruction of the underlying Thamūdic myth. They involved the drawing together of the lore of pre-Islamic Arabia, the Qur᾿ān, the Biography of the Prophet, and the Stories of the Prophets, the major Islamic works written in the manner of hagiographies. Once reconstructed, and deconstructed (chapter 6), this Arabian myth then serves as the basis for a comparative study of myth and symbol, beginning with the unearthed golden bough of the Thamūd itself (and with James G. Frazer's *The Golden Bough*), but moving quickly to a more focused literary discussion of archaic, classical primary, and classical secondary epic (Gilgamesh, Homer, and Vergil).

The Introduction argues in behalf of an Arabian mythology. For the most part it pursues the traces of the scattered morphology of myth in Arabic culture. Chapter 1 presents the essential textual sources for the unearthing of the golden bough—among them the Qur᾿ān, the Traditions of the Prophet, the Biography of the Prophet, the Stories of the Prophets, and encyclopaedic and exegetical compendia. On the basis of these materials, some of which offer no more than detached brief episodes or scattered tesserae of a shattered ancient verbal mosaic, we can reconstruct the overarching Arabian myth of the Thamūd—and within it begin to place the puzzle of the Thamūdic golden bough. Chapter 2 provides further background to the myth of the fall of the autochthonous Arabian race of the Thamūd to allow for the construction of a narrative around the mythic slaying of the She-Camel of Ṣāliḥ. Chapter 3 offers an interpretation of Muḥammad's raid on Tabūk as a reenactment of the trials of the Thamūdic prophet Ṣāliḥ. In Chapter 4 the bivalent identity of Abū Righāl, in whose grave the Thamūdic golden bough was discovered, is explored in terms of the ambiguity of totem and taboo. Chapter 5 demonstrates how in classical Arabic poetry the tragic dimension of the Thamūdic myth comes to the fore, as opposed to the exegetical moral dimension of the Qur᾿ān and qur᾿ānic materials. Chapter 6 presents the history—as opposed to the mythography—of the downfall of the caravan city of the Thamūd. Chapter 7 discusses the mythic and seismic aspect of the Thamūdic final "scream" that marked the moment of their destruction. Chapter 8 takes Frazer's *Golden Bough* as the starting point for an excursus into the comparative sphere of archaic and classical epic with a view to the further identification and interpretation of the symbol of the golden bough. Finally, the Conclusion places the Arabian golden bough at the core of an Arabian myth that produces a symbolic identification of Qudār, the slayer of the She-Camel of Ṣāliḥ, Ṣāliḥ, the Thamūdic prophet himself, and Muḥammad, the discoverer of the golden bough.

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Muḥammad and the Golden Bough

Introduction

Reclaiming Arabian Myth

■ Arabic literary culture comes to us magisterially introduced by its pre-Islamic odes/*qaṣīdah*s, indeed by the entire classical Arabic poetic corpus, and by the Qur'ān. Western literary-critical culture has lived with that legacy in an unbroken, although fluctuating, dialogue at least since the late eighteenth century;[1] and our poetic culture, too, has lived off the legacy of that culture with a receptivity that was equally fluctuating—invariably between romantic enthusiasm and formalist hesitancy.

Our awareness of the mythic-legendary side of Arabic literary culture in poetry as well as outside it, however, has remained less well informed—as well as less receptive. First of all, too early in our contacts with the Arabian cultural legacy we came to assume that, outside certain mytho-legendary elements in popular Arabic literature, such as the *Arabian Nights,* there was little else of mythical, legendary, and, broadly speaking, symbolic source material to be expected from that legacy. The richly narrative Arabic "folk epics," such as those of *Zīr Sālim,* the *Sīrah of ʿAntar,* the *Hilālīyah,* and others, suffered an early linguistic-dogmatic (translated into ideological) condemnation by an intransigently classicist Arabic literary-historical "establishment." For various code-based reasons, which we now feel free to call summarily unliterary, that establishment, a true Arabic historical construct, chose to exclude from its legitimizing critical concerns all "popular" literary manifestations, that is, that kind of textuality that did not follow either the formal Arabic genre-code or, above all, the code of the ideological-more-than-linguistic construct of a "literary" language. Thus Arabic formal criticism and formal literary history well-nigh allowed Western interest in Arabic literature, and in the Arabic cultural legacy as a whole, to drift into almost pontifically handed-down fixed notions of Arabic literature and of the entire complex of Arabic cultural legacy—a situation that has only recently begun to change, as in both the East and the West the multidimensional richness of Arabic folk literature is being recognized and studied.

Regarding the traditional classical corpus, however, the literary-critical and cultural-critical "front" became (and largely remained) unified between the East and the West in matters of code inclusions and exclusions, recognitions and denials. In this picture, qur'ānic religious-dogmatic, as well as philological and cautiously literary, studies—always subservient to exegesis—came to hold an undisputed primacy. Myth and symbol were excluded from their hermeneutics.

The legendary, myth-forming potential of the many narrative incipiencies in the Qur'ān became a tempting, narratively expansive ground nonetheless. Throughout the classical Islamic centuries, narrative fragments of Qur'ān and Ḥadīth were picked up as mythopoeic spinoffs by historic-encyclopaedic compendia and florilegia. Together with much overlapping legendary material, they were culled from surrounding literate and oral cultures and shaped into coherent stories and ideo-units. Among other things, Arabic-Islamic legendary renditions of diverse prophetic life stories, known as "stories of the prophets" *(qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā')*, thus came into being.

An Arabic would-be hagiography, especially that part of it that touches upon materials other than those held in common with the Hebrew Bible, that is, those that drew on and grew around stories of prophets of Arabian legendary ancestry, thus became narrative structures falling somewhere between "catechism" and "permissible" *(ḥalāl)* new mythology. Here the interesting thing is that, although the catechismic purpose in this would-be hagiography claims, on the surface, to be the primary one, as a textual component it is, nevertheless, no more than the expression of an unconfessed "neomythography." No case is clearer than that of the people of Thamūd, their rock-hewn city of al-Ḥijr, their prophet Ṣāliḥ, and the divine scourge that befell them when they slew the She-Camel of God, which, together, offer not merely the setting but also an essential subject-component in the present book about the Arabian golden bough.

"One of the practical functions of criticism, by which I mean the conscious organization of a cultural tradition, is, I think, to make us more aware of our mythological conditioning." Northrop Frye thus readies himself for his study of the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, or, in Western cultural-historical terms, the Great Code.[2] Strongly agreeing with this premise (and dimension) of cultural and literary criticism, I nevertheless find it extremely difficult to approach the task of a "critical organization" of the Arabic cultural tradition and, in it, the place of myth. For, of its own volition and without shying away from the awkwardness of declarative rhetoric, Arabia and the Arabia-nurtured and Arabic-speaking world has most stubbornly denied itself the acknowledgment of a "mythological conditioning," that is, what we have termed here its "unconfessed neomythography."

Within the premises of this Arabian stance—begun with the Qurʾān's instant, and almost total, doctrinal impact—Arabic cultural history, with all its anthropological constructs, was supposed to have begun and thereafter forever to unfold in the clarity of broad daylight, as it were. All "falsehood" and all "truth" were forever absolutely differentiated into some timeless pre-revelation (the age of Jāhilīyah) that was followed by an equally timeless revelation (the Qurʾān), that is, into that which *exists not* and that which *exists*: *al-bāṭil* and *al-ḥaqq*. The former has not had or could not possibly have any cultural-historical continuum, whereas the latter, by being an immutable hermeneutical monolith, or an absolute "given," precluded in a starkly declarative manner even hermeneutics itself: It *was* (and *is*), and that was what it *was* (and *is*). An absolute binary breakdown of ideated time thus became instituted.

The knowledge of the communal Arabian past and its inheritors' creative and re-creative self-knowledge within it were definitely not furthered by the concrete, ahistorical, and antimythical doctrinal stance that relegated mythic materials to anecdotal and "catechistic" functions. An earnestness, and even somberness, of rigorous theological dogma came to reign with an almost puzzling, and, in its single-mindedness, unrippled march through more than a millennium of history. It succeeded from the first qurʾānic moment in almost suppressing or banishing into unusually reclusive layers of subconsciousness that part of the counterdogmatic Arabian cultural "self" which, under conditions of a less stable doctrinal rigor, would have had the strength to lead that culture to its remythologizing, or to an awareness of its "mythological conditioning."

In this respect even more inhibiting than the suppressions and condemnations that came forth from the doctrinal apparatus which had formed itself around the newly-arrived Arabian sacred text and which soon succeeded in forming its own cultural code was the co-optation by that new code of much of the most centrally autochthony-determining materials of the old code. This process began with the confrontation of the central values of the old ethos—those values that were embedded in the language itself. By this I mean those numerous cultural key words and concepts of the archaic Bedouin ethos and of its once comprehensive value system that found their way into the very core of the new ethos and code—whether through the inversion of their original meanings, or through a selective exception assumed toward them, or through their full, unqualified co-optation.

It would be too cumbersome to go through the most numerous co-optations and redefinitions of Arabian cultural key words through which the old code was brought to its knees and the new code was allowed to emerge. To stop over only a few, it is easily noted that some, such as the binary pairing *raghbah/rahbah* ("desire," "aspiration"/"awe"), came through the peripheral transferal of symbols from ancient, and not so ancient, empires and kingships in which these words, or concepts, had defined the relationship of the client to the sovereign. With this ritualized sense they found their way into pre-Islamic Arabic poetic lore and from there, or along the parallel tiers and variants of existing "scriptural sources," into the conceptualizing language of relationships in the Qurʾān.[3] Another term, *ghayb* ("absence," "hiddenness"), that is, everything "revealed but not fathomable or verifiable," had its semantic base in the terminology of the pre-Islamic Arabian hunt, where it meant "the hunter's invisibility to the quarry." In the Qurʾān, *ghayb* is zealously guarded as the sole domain of God; and only he can reveal it.[4] In the process of its co-optation, an important Bedouin term designating "blood kinship," *ʿashīrah*,[5] on the other hand, underwent no change that would be registered textually or in lexicons, although in its Qurʾān-initiated contexts it failed to maintain the intensity of its commitment to, and the implications of, old Bedouin custom.

Almost the sole word of the Bedouin Arabic specifically poetic and festive realm to become on the one hand qurʾānically rejected while on the other hand, and, as it were, in the same breath, co-opted into the Qurʾān's own mythic sphere of the Garden of the Blessed was *khamr* ("wine"). It is quite ironic that it was only by forbidding wine "on earth," that is, by making it inaccessible to mortals and then by transferring it to the place and the life "beyond mortality," that it attained in Arabic its "mythical transubstantiation." It became the analogue to the "nectar of the gods," a mythically conceived and represented human desire: "A parable of the Garden promised to the righteous, in it there are rivers of water incorruptible . . . and rivers of wine, a joy to those who drink. . . ."[6] Or again, "Truly the righteous are in bliss. / On thrones they look out [commandingly]. / You recognize in their faces the glow of bliss. / Their thirst is slaked with pure sealed wine [nectar], / whose seal is musk: and for this, let the aspirers aspire. / Its mixture is that of Tasnīm, / a spring from which drink the favored ones."[7] This wine thus became an enticement and, paradoxically, a form of moral compensatory currency that, in order to circulate "on earth," had to deny itself or to dematerialize, as it were, into earthly probity or, rather, submission to a law imposed without explanation or justification. No wonder that with so much built-in complexity and paradox, both "ancient" and "new" wine became almost the only denied/co-opted element not to have lost in Arabic cultural lore and social circumstance much, if any, of its hold on multiple levels of Arab mythogenic imagination—if not on its myth itself, certainly on much of its mythopoeia.[8]

Denied and made indispensable at the same time was the word *al-jāhilīyah* itself, which, in its new terminological usage evidenced already in the Qurʾān, had come to define the age preceding the coming of Islam as the *Age of Ignorance*. In the Qurʾān this term is found in diverse contexts, however. Thus, in arguing away the defeat of the Muslims in the Battle of Uḥud by the still "pagan" Quraysh of Mecca, it is used to explain the distress and loss of faith of the Muslim host after their previous excitement of near-victory (Qurʾān 3:154). It defines the judgment of the ungodly to be like that of *al-jāhilīyah* (Qurʾān 5:53). It occurs again as "the First Jāhilīyah," to be understood also as "the Jāhilīyah of bygone days" (*al-jāhilīyah l-ūlā*, Qurʾān 33:33). In that latter formulation, too, it thereafter becomes a "companion term" that stresses the remoteness, both temporally and morally, of the age before Islam; and, more than that, it also contributes to a conspicuously imprecise further subdivision of its own broader scope into two prophetic sub-ages, one from Adam to Noah or, equally likely, to Abraham, and the other from Jesus to Muḥammad.[9]

The most revealing qur'ānic occurrence of *al-jāhilīyah* is in Sura 48, of Victory *(al-fatḥ)*, verse 26, for there it stands introduced and, indeed, interpreted by another term of decisive significance, *ḥamīyah*[10] ("zeal, "heat," "heat of combat"), which, in turn, is the synonym of *jahl*, the etymon of *al-jāhilīyah*. Quite clearly, *jahl* also means "ignorance"; but more than "not knowing," it is "knowing no other [way]." In its pre-Islamic tribal and warlike contexts it is the Bedouin warrior's "intemperance," "fierceness," and even single-minded, self-sacrificial "heroism," which is not ethical, ideological, or devotional, but merely psychological and "adrenergic."

There was thus this earlier underlying sense to the new Islamic abstraction and conceptualization of *al-jāhilīyah* for it, as term, to have become fully meaningful as periodization. After all, "Islam" *(islām)* did not mean knowledge/*gnosis* to have produced as its antonym non-knowledge/ignorance/*agnosis*. Islam was "submission," and submission was *not* there to abrogate "ignorance." If its opposite was indeed *jahl*, that *jahl* of "non-submission," once again, did not mean ignorance. There had to have taken place, therefore, a semantic circumvention. Inasmuch as *islām* had an almost synonymic relationship to another Arabic cultural key term, that of *ḥilm* ("forbearance," "indulgence," "discernment," "gravity," "sobriety"), which was an object of full, positive co-optation by the Islamic ethos, and inasmuch as this *ḥilm* was the true antonym of *jahl*, this legitimately syllogistic equation was capable of producing the graspable binary opposition and semantic antonymy between *islām* and *jahl*—submission and non-submission—and, ultimately, the terminological antiposition between Islam, the creed, and al-Jāhilīyah, the non-creed.

Thus *jahl/jāhilīyah* had to have been a singularly important concept (or state) in archaic Bedouinity to have deserved such a stupendous "transfer" into its new terminological prominence—and into its paradoxical semiotic self-denial. We must, therefore, entertain the strong notion that its denial by the new Arabia that emerged with Islam also meant Arabia's denial of myth as its cultural, autochthony-defining ingredient. For myth, all myth—the epics it engenders and those from which it nourishes itself—not just Arabian myth, is hardly conceivable without the presence of *jahl* somewhere near its very core. This *jahl*, however, also in its archaic Arabic understanding, is above all that kind of heroism that also contains its own tragic flaw.

The pre-Islamic Battle Days of the Arabs *(Ayyām al-ʿArab)* were in the Arabic terminological sense paradigmatic manifestations of *jahl.* It is in such Days that the warfare between two brotherly tribes, the Banū Bakr and the Banū Taghlib, finds its legendary, epic, and even mythic expression. Begun with the slaying of the She-Camel of Basūs of the Banū Bakr and the counter-slaying of Kulayb, the imperious leader of the Banū Taghlib, the bloody fratricidal animosity continues for forty years, providing one of the most fertile sources for the lore of *jahl.*[11]

The mythic and strongly archetypal aspect of the War of Basūs is underscored further by the very semantics and semiotics inherent in the names of the two warring sides, the [Banū] Bakr and the [Banū] Taghlib. According to tribal genealogy, they are the descendants of the eponymic sons of Wāʾil, himself an eponymic progenitor. In the archetypal sense, however, what we ultimately come to know of the two respective tribes and their founders reveals itself to us first of all through the meanings of the eponymous tribal names: Bakr and Taghlib. And the essence of their legendary fratricidal war of forty years should also emerge as symbolically related to their names. For in archetypal terms, Bakr, the "elder," that is, literally, "the first-born son," the one endowed with the privileges of primogeniture (translated in the Arabian sense into privileged pasture grounds), is challenged and overpowered by his younger brother Taghlib. In symbolic terms this is borne out by the name of the second-born, *Taghlib,* which in personal terms means "*you* shall prevail," and, with reference to the tribe, "*it* shall prevail." It is here that the mythical Jacob and Esau archetype of succession-and-foundation finds its fulfillment. Of the two brothers/tribes, through their wars of mythical characteristics, such as the War of Basūs of forty years' duration, the younger of the two inheritors of the patrimony of the progenitor Wāʾil shall be "victorious": *taghlib.*[12] As for Wāʾil himself, his name, too, is symbolically significant. On the one hand it approaches being Abrahamic in its meaning of "refuge," while on the other hand it imprints on its eponymic bearer a mark of tragedy by also meaning "a great calamity."

Among Muḥammad's own warlike activities, still at the divide between the pre-Islamic and Islamic periods, the Battle of Badr and the Battle of Uḥud—each one in its own way, and each one depending on the perspective assumed, whether that of the new co-optation-through-inversion of *jahl* or that of its untouched inherited meaning—were, respectively, either the last acts of pre-Islamic *jahl,* or the first acts of its denial. In the Battle of Badr, due to unusual heroism of epic proportion, or, according to the new interpretive perspective, due to divine intervention, the small host of Muḥammad achieved a startling victory over a numerically overpowering army of the still "unbelieving" Meccan Quraysh. *Jahl,* then, was on the Muslim side, if viewed from the side of the Meccan unbelievers. In the Battle of Uḥud, however, those once-defeated Quraysh avenged themselves with a ferocity that only the purest *jahl* could have induced.[13]

Ignaz Goldziher, in his excursus on "What is Meant by al-Jāhiliyya," understood al-Jāhilīyah as denoting the Arabian "time of barbarism" and, especially in its primary terminological sense, as not at all being the time of a nondescript "ignorance." He saw furthermore that, inasmuch as *jahl* is opposed terminologically as well as broadly semantically to *ḥilm,* the adjectival *jāhil*—to him the terminological equivalent of "barbarian"—would thus be the antonym of the equally adjectival epithet *ḥalīm,* which he proposed should be understood as "what we call a civilized man."[14] Ultimately, however, this "barbarian"/"civilized" antiposition is to Goldziher not an antiposition in the sense of a mutually excluding, or repelling, polarization; for he recognizes that, precisely as *jahl* and *ḥilm* form part of the pre-Islamic Arab personal and communal ethos, both qualities, together, blend in quite equal measure into the Bedouin formation of the view of the *heroic*—for which another early term, that of "manliness" *(murūwah),* then emerges (and is duly recognized by Goldziher) as a figural galvanizer and an embodiment. With some hesitation in the face of a possible socio-ideological anachronism, albeit with appreciation of its basic analytical correctness, we have, therefore, to rise above Goldziher's barbarian/civilized, not entirely felicitous dichotomizing of the pre-Islamic Bedouin heroic *persona* into "barbarian" and "civilized."

Jahl and *ḥilm,* and their intertwined heroic coexistence in an implied *murūwah,* come to the fore in the following early anonymous lines:

> Although I be in need of *circumspection (ḥilm),*
> Of *fierceness (jahl)* I am at times in greater need.
> I do not fancy *fierceness* as bosom friend and fellow,
> But free rein I do give it when in straits.
> Should people [other warriors] say, 'In this
>   there is accommodation,'

They'd speak the truth: Abasement is most foul
to one born free.
A horse I have for *circumspection* with
circumspection bridled.
Saddled with *fierceness*, for *fierceness*,
I have another horse.
To him that wishes me unbending, unbending I shall be,
But if he wants me crooked,
there's crookedness in me![15]

We know *jahl* from other mythological, epic-heroic, and legendary sources abundantly well. Thus in the *Iliad*'s Trojan War both Achilles and Hector represent *jahl*. The "wrath of Achilles" was *jahl*. His mad run around the walls of Troy in pursuit of Hector was *jahl*. Indeed, the entire Trojan War was a magnificent manifestation of *jahl*. In the European mediaeval epic, scenes of *jahl* are those poems' true mythic residue. The combat and death scenes in the *Nibelungenlied*—especially those of the death of Siegfried, Gunther, and Hagen—will be understood best through an understanding of *jahl*. The battle at Roncesvalles in the *Chanson de Roland* offers an almost single-minded focus on the psychology and the ethos of *jahl*. The *Song of Igor* and the pathos of Igor's host's defeat by the Polovcians with that prince's heroic escape are that epic's two faces of *jahl*. Above all, most closely qualified as *jahl* even terminologically was the Norse "berserker rage," the ability of Norse fighters to raise themselves to almost superhuman levels of strength and frenzied fury in battle.

Today *jahl* is only known to us as the momentarily triggered, ungraspable, and uncontrollable state in individuals and groups under special conditions of danger and stress. It is most consistently experienced in sports, where it may be referred to as "being in a phase." Regardless of the flippancy of its new television medium, in present-day science fiction *jahl* was correctly identified as an archetype and a new myth in the story/phenomenon of the "wrath" of the Incredible Hulk, the man who mutates metabolically when possessed by ire, reaching heights of power and size.

Having no use for the myth-forming capacity of *jahl*, the new ethos and order of Islam saw its states as dangerous, unpredictable, and ungovernable. In moral terms *jahl* was thus understood correctly, albeit still in the ancient tribal manner, as that quality that stands opposite *ḥilm*. No doubt strengthened by that context, the latter was, therefore, co-opted with double zeal, unrestricted and unchanged, while the former was exscinded as ethos and psychological dimension, and its time condemned to remain known, but not understood, as the Jāhilīyah.

In a more "storied," genre-determined understanding of myth and legend, other than that of "the myth behind the word"[16] which we have pursued so far, the Arabian memory of the past proved not to have been wholly subdued by the new canon after all—especially not by its co-optation into the new canon. Some mythic material escaped that new canon's rigor at least vestigially. It was still given to speak of portentous things gone by, things that had remained afloat in the collective Arabian memory, not always differentiated in their communal proprietorship and provenance. Such was the narrative mythic debris associated with the Hebrew Bible, or with the even vaguer sources that imaginatively and narratively had fed into the Hebrew Bible: the story of the Flood, the story of Joseph, the Solomonic mythic florilegium and sprouting mythopoeia of the Bilqīs legend,[17] and other, less evolved, or merely alluded-to mythical narrative residues or incipiencies. These, however, precisely through their narrative stinginess, if not altogether inadequacy, took care to remind us that in its recesses, outside its "text," the Arabian collective memory must have retained much more than it cared, or was allowed, to retell. In the "text" itself, Arabian myth lived mostly in echoes and off echoes.

The problem with a number of these nuclei of myth was that in their survival in the new code, that is, through their co-optation by the Qurʾān (and the subsequent dogmatizing tradition), they were put to the service of a rhetoric that was almost inimical to "narrative" itself—this despite the qurʾānic claim that there they are being told in the best of narrative ways. That is, in the Qurʾān, narrative, and indeed everything else, is subordinated to the overarching rhetoric of salvation and damnation.[18] Thus in the Sura of the Cave (18), after a narratively chaotic introduction (vv. 9-12) to the story of the Sleepers of Ephesus—which is due precisely to that story's total subordination to antinarrative rhetorical purposes—we are told that "We relate to you their [the Sleepers'] story [news] in truth: they were youths who believed in their Lord, and we increased them in guidance" (v. 13). Verses 14-15, and most of verse 16, then merely perpetuate the narrative disruption through indoctrinating rhetoric, and only verses 17-22 return us to the story—and there, too, in most uneven ways. Altogether the narrative is so strongly punctuated with the rhetoric of admonition that its flow may only be pieced together against the grain of its rhetoric.[19] In the Sura of Ṭāhā (20), which retells the story of Moses at length, that narrative concludes: "Thus do we narrate to you some stories [news] of what happened before, for we have brought to you from us remembrance" (v. 99). This is then followed by verses of admonitory rhetoric and eschatological drama, only to be structurally repeated, still in the same sura, in the "story" of Adam and Satan, and ending in an admonition of the necessity of "guidance" *(wa man ihtadā)* (v. 135). The story of Moses is told again in the Sura of the Heights (7), followed by a similar reference to, or admittance of, the virtue of storytelling, although there it is, more than anything else, a curious refrain to the strictly proverbial "example" of "the dog with the lolling tongue" (v. 176).

Rarely do we sense in the Qurʾān a self-sufficient and self-justifying joy in storytelling; indeed, rarely, if at all, does the Qurʾān allow for the formation of "themes" in the literary terminological understanding, that is, of descriptive (or imagist) units that possess their own formal and thematic circumscription and "sufficiency" and are not intruded upon by a stylistically disruptive rhetoric. Rather than "themes" in the literary sense, the Qurʾān, therefore, knows primarily rhetorically subordinated motifs.[20]

An exception to this is the Sura of Yūsuf (12), which presents a sustained story, even if it, too, is interspersed with predictable, and stylistically entirely Qurʾān-specific, admonitions and "self-exegetical" interjections. Furthermore, it is not told according to the narrative model of the Hebrew version. Unlike the latter, the qurʾānic rendition is not an ideology-saturated pretense of tribal history, and, for that reason, it is more detached and more archetypal—and thus closer to myth.[21] It is in this story alone (perhaps with the exception of one verse in the story of the Sleepers of the Cave [v. 19]) that the sense of the "joy of storytelling" is perceived in the Qurʾān. With at least an internal qurʾānic justification, therefore, its verse 3 opens the narration: "We narrate to you the most beautiful of stories . . ." *(naḥnu naquṣṣu ʿalayka aḥsana l-qaṣaṣi).* It is then not surprising that in the closure of the qurʾānic Joseph story (v. 111), too, we should be given another observation on the virtue of "storytelling"—that, when all is told, a narrative self-reflection should be perceived as necessary: "There is, in their stories, instruction for those endowed with understanding. It is not a tale invented, but a confirmation of what went before. . . ."

Despite the narrative inconsistency of the Qurʾān, we must nevertheless recognize its unflagging, almost compensatory capacity to generate textually secondary narrative mythopoeia. Of this expansive corpus of Arabic "neomythography," a most intriguing episode is that of the Arabian "golden bough" which the Prophet Muḥammad—as consistently retold in the context of the dissension-ridden march on Tabūk—unearthed from the grave of the last survivor of the divine destruction of the Thamūd. One source of this episode's allure is the narratological challenge of reconstructing the myth from the briefest of *ḥadīth*-references and their recontextualization; another is the discovery of a myth that incorporates the Biography (Sīrah) of the Prophet Muḥammad into autochthonous Arabian myth; and, finally, there is its compelling comparative mythographic potential.

1

The Textual Puzzle

■ In its own tangle of myth and legend, which is no less dense and dark than the "boundless forest" that lay before Vergil's Aeneas on his road to where his golden bough shone out amid the branches of the twofold tree,[1] there lies buried together with the last ancient Thamūdean the mysterious Arabic reference to a "golden bough." In its textual latency, it is only barely gleanable from such classical Arabic sources as al-Ṭabarī's (d. 310/923) *Commentary on the Qur'ān,* Ibn Kathīr's (d. 774/1373) *The Beginning and the End* as well as his *The Stories of the Prophets,* al-Thaᶜlabī's (427/1035- ?) *The Book of the Stories of the Prophets,* and finally—or firstly—from its "validating," but entirely decontextualized and narratively bare, *ḥadīth* (prophetic traditions) locus.[2]

In spite of the parsimony of narrative context in the Arabic references to that golden bough, however,—a parsimony which is also characteristic of the style of the "sayings" and "acts" attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad (*ḥadīth/sunnah* and *akhbār*)—what emerges out of such isolated, if not altogether truncated, Arabic texts is nevertheless the striking, puzzle-like detachment and narrative unselfconsciousness of the manner in which the term "golden bough," i.e., *ghuṣnun min dhahabin,* is spelled out.

In the Arabic sources the "story" in these minimalistic references to such an arcane object is as follows: As the Prophet Muḥammad in one of his military campaigns was on the road to Tabūk, which at that time was the southernmost Byzantine outpost in Arabia, he passed by the ancient al-Ḥijr of the Thamūd, and a series of stories/*ḥadīth*s connected to the tragic fate of the Thamūd and to their city was told. Among these there was one which the Prophet himself volunteered, and which comes phrased in a narratively provocative, stylistically quite "folkloric" manner.[3] It goes that, as Muḥammad passed by a grave, he halted and said to those around him, "Do you know what this is?" and they answered, "Only God and his Prophet know for certain." "This," he replied answering his own question, "is the grave of Abū Righāl [Rughāl]." But they said, "And who is Abū Righāl?" "A man of the Thamūd," replied he. "He was in God's sanctuary, which protected him from God's punishment, but when he stepped outside it, there smote him that which had smitten his people. He was buried in this very place,[4] and with him was buried a bough of gold!" At this the Prophet's companions dismounted and hastened to dig open the grave with their swords, and they brought up the bough.[5]

But, whereas the "golden bough" texts in al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Kathīr end here, the text of al-Thaᶜlabī's more narrative work continues: "Then the Prophet muffled his face in his cloak and hurried on in his march till he had crossed the valley."[6] An inference of awe remains in the air after the brief story is thus told, planting in the reader's mind an awareness that it has touched upon some portentous events, and that the golden bough is somehow the sign of the mystery surrounding those events. Such a scene reappears also in the incident of the ring which one of the Tabūk raiders finds in the ruins of al-Ḥijr. Muḥammad orders him to throw the ring back, covers his eyes, and turns away in mysterious awe.[7]

This brings us to the broader contextualization of the Arabic "surprise" of the golden bough. Viewed properly, there are two contexts to be taken into account. The more immediate context is that of the time and the circumstance in which the finding of the golden bough occurs in the sources, that is, the events of the last military expedition led by Muḥammad personally, which is the raid on Tabūk (9/630). It was during that raid that Muḥammad and his followers passed by the old Nabataean-Thamūdic mortuary city of al-Ḥijr/Madāʾin Ṣāliḥ. But we shall not be able to understand the meaning of the Arabian golden bough in that context alone without first reaching further back into the pre-Islamic and pre-Arab—although not non-Arabian—past of the people of Thamūd and of their city of al-Ḥijr, the destruction of the people and of their city, and the city's rebirth as Madāʾin Ṣāliḥ in myth and in parascriptural tradition. This will be our second, less immediate, although, as concerns the recovery of the myth itself, primary context.

The original textual salvaging of the myth of the downfall of Thamūd takes place in the Qur'ān, where there are no less than twenty-one suras that make reference to the Thamūd as a people. All of these references, however, are built into the comprehensive rhetorical qur'ānic strategy of serving as *exempla* within the cyclic theonomous, rather than temporal, reappearance of recalcitrant nations, of prophetic stories of intercessions and warnings, and of the unfailing punishment of those nations or of their utter destruction.[8]

Because of the rhetorical subservience of the "matter" of Thamūd in the Qur'ān, only scattered fragments of it appear in any one segment of that text; and, furthermore, only four of the fragments extend beyond the scope of one to three verses. Thus the Sura of the Heights (7) contains seven verses (vv. 73-79), of Hūd (11) eight (vv. 61-68), of the Poets (26) eighteen (vv. 141-158), and of the Moon (54) ten (vv. 23-32). A further characteristic of all twenty-one of the qur'ānic occurrences of the topic of the Thamūd is that, with the exception of the single-verse references in the Suras of the Repentance and of the Pilgrimage, which are of the Medinan period, all the others are the product of the early Meccan, much more strongly mythopoeically swayed inspiration.

The story, as it appears in its characteristic qur'ānic disjointedness in the four major texts (The Heights, Hūd, The Poets, The Moon), is terse in the extreme: in their iniquity the people of Thamūd, who had once lived in opulence amidst their gardens, springs, and tilled fields, feeling secure in their skillfully executed, rock-hewn dwellings, had belied previous apostles [of warning], till God sent to them his "faithful messenger" Ṣāliḥ to admonish them against spreading "corruption in the land" (7:74; 27:48). The Thamūd, however, called Ṣāliḥ a simple mortal like themselves, or at best one "bewitched." They demanded of him a "sign" of God's power, if he were indeed "one of the truthful." As such a sign, but also "as a trial for them" *(fitnatan lahum)*, God sent to the Thamūd a she-camel. The trial was to consist of this: That the she-camel, which was also the explicit "She-Camel of God" *(nāqatu Allāhi)*—not "the She-Camel of Ṣāliḥ" of subsequent Islamic hermeneutical adjustment and mythopoeia—was to have the right of sole access to all the water of the Thamūd on alternate days. On those days the Thamūd would have to withhold their herds of camels [and flocks of other livestock] from all access to water and abstain from it themselves, awaiting their own respective alternate days; nor were they to touch the she-camel with harm, lest punishment of "a portentous day" befall them. But the Thamūd did not heed the warning. They hamstrung and slew the she-camel. The next day they were remorseful—but to no avail. The Prophet Ṣāliḥ gave them three days' respite to ponder, or rather, to "take pleasure" in their abode for those three days (*tamattaʿū fī dārikum thalāthata ayyāmin* [11:65]), after which a great "scream" *(al-ṣayḥah)* destroyed them.

Such is the extent of the qurʾānic use of the myth of the downfall of the Thamūd. Indeed, the opaqueness of its textually scattered segments almost fails to yield a composite narrative. And yet, defying its opacity and disjointedness is its employ in the Qurʾān as a "clear" *exemplum,* thus as something whose understanding is postulated on the prior knowledge of some broader framing sphere of an invoked, but not elicited, myth or legend. This myth, or legend, as it is recorded in the various extant texts, is, however, no longer easily datable to the age of pure oral lore before the advent of Islam, for it is to be assumed that along the centuries that led up to its collection and redaction it has undergone its own evolution not only as mythopoeia but also as a hermeneutic tool at the service of the qurʾānic text. It is, therefore, only as such, within this vague correlation of textual purposes, that we find embedded the story of the Arabian golden bough: hidden anecdotally within a myth. The myth itself is told, once again in a manner that begs for a cumulative retelling, in narrative as well as in exegetic sources such as the *Commentary* of al-Ṭabarī, the comprehensive history of "things first and last," that is, *The Beginning and the End,* of Ibn Kathīr, the encyclopaedic *Ultimate Aspiration* of al-Nuwayrī (d. 732/1332), the hagiographic *Stories of the Prophets* of al-Thaʿlabī, and, likewise, in the *Tales of the Prophets* of al-Kisāʾī, a not clearly identified author who must have written his work sometime shortly before A.D. 1200.[9]

The textual puzzle that results from the twin mythic contexts of the Arabian golden bough—externally, Muḥammad's discord-ridden march on Tabūk and, internally as well as necessarily implicitly, the destruction of the Thamūd—becomes even more clamant and challenging by the fact, in itself puzzling, that modern scholarship has entirely failed to even mention the Arabian "golden bough."

2

The Thamūdic Backdrop to the Puzzle

■ It is characteristic of all of these "reconstructive" texts that they are sustained in a rigorously mythologizing mode, not touching upon the actual historicity of the people called Thamūd, save for their name, their settlement in the rock city of al-Ḥijr, and their ultimate total disappearance. Above all, what we are not given even to speculate about—either in the Qur'ān or in the extra-qur'ānic myth—is the historical time of their sojourn and, especially, of their destruction. Only their myth remains, which is to say, only the ahistorical meaning of their existence has been propelled into historical time, with the purpose of interpreting other things, not itself. On such levels we may thus easily empathize with Jawād ʿAlī, the modern Iraqi historian of pre-Islamic Arabia, as he vents his uneasiness with the distinct ahistoricity of the postulation of the Thamūdic question evidenced in existing Arabic textual transmission. In his search for surefooted historicity, he calls this perplexing state of affairs "a lack of perception for either time or place."[1] But then, as Bernard F. Batto remarks, myth also "stands outside of time as we know it and serves as the *principle* or source of secular time and order." And, as such, a myth becomes "paradigmatic for the society in which that myth is operative."[2]

The mytho-qur'ānic story of the Thamūd does indeed possess its paradigmatic mythical time frame, for we know from the qur'ānic lineages of prophetic cycles and sequences that the Thamūd flourished and perished in that time of cyclic polytheistic rebellion and punishment that is flanked respectively by the even more enigmatic, myth-encoded, explicitly "archaic" peoples of ʿĀd and Madyan, and, as a secondary mytho-frame to those two (we should assume), in accordance with qurʾānic lineage, by the people of Noah/Nūḥ at the head of a separate mythical lineage and by those of Lot/Lūṭ at the tail. Only then does the Abrahamic/Ibrāhīmic mythos begin—in the Qurʾān as well as in the Arabic narrative and exegetic mythopoeia—but not without establishing a link across preceding prophetic cycles with the Thamūdic mythic matrix. Thus we read in the early, still highly mythographic layers of al-Ṭabarī's *History*, that Ismāʿīl, the son of Abraham, is said to have been buried beside the grave of his mother Hagar in no other place than al-Ḥijr of the Thamūd.[3]

The story of the Thamūd, especially up to the ominous "trial" *(fitnah)* of the she-camel, which al-Kisāʾī and al-Nuwayrī retell more exhaustively than the other mythographers, freely mixes a highly syncretic flow of the narrative with wholly decontextualized quotations from the Qurʾān. It begins with Kānūh, the high priest of the Thamūd, as he receives the signs of the coming of his son, Ṣāliḥ. The scene is distinctly one of "annunciation." Kānūh was in the temple of the idols "when the semen of Ṣāliḥ moved in his spine, giving a glow to his eyes. And he heard a voice calling: 'Truth has come and falsehood perished; surely falsehood is bound to perish.'"[4] Upon hearing this, Kānūh became frightened and turned to the "supreme idol," which spoke to him: "Why do you turn to me? One like you serves me, but the earth is radiant with the light of your face for the light which is in your spine."[5] Then the idol tumbled down from its throne, but Kānūh, still not grasping the implications of the "change of covenants," re-placed it there.[6]

When that which had occurred in the temple reached the ears of the king, he sank into deep gloom. His courtiers quickly put all the blame on Kānūh, accusing him of bad service to the gods. The king wished to kill Kānūh, but God hid the priest from his enemies' eyes; and when night fell and Kānūh was asleep, angels picked him up and deposited him in a distant valley. There Kānūh saw a cave in a mountain. He entered it to escape the rays of the sun, and soon fell asleep. His sleep lasted for one hundred years.[7]

The Thamūd now considered Kānūh lost and appointed another high priest to serve their idols. "One day they went out to celebrate one of their feasts, when the trees around them spoke, saying: 'O race of Thamūd, are you not going to give heed? God gives you a yield of fruits twice a year, yet you renege on his bounty and worship others than him.' And likewise spoke the cattle. But they [the Thamūd] turned on the trees and cut them down, and they slew the cattle. Then the beasts of prey spoke, calling down from the tops of the mountains: 'Woe to you, O race of Thamūd, do not cut down those trees, nor slaughter these cattle, for they spoke the truth!'"[8] at which the Thamūd set out with their weapons, and the wild beasts fled before them.

After one hundred years Kānūh's wife is visited by the Raven of Paradise, the same raven that had once instructed Cain on how to bury his brother Abel.[9] It guided Kānūh's wife to the cave and brought him out of his sleep. It was then that Kānūh lay with his wife, and she conceived Ṣāliḥ.

The appearance of the Raven of Paradise in the story of Kānūh at this point turns our attention to the Arabic symbolic, mythical, and then massively poetic lore of that bird as one of the Arabian imagination's richest poetic-elegiac motifs. In all its roles and exemplifications, however, the raven/crow *(ghurāb)* appears as a messenger; but its messages are diverse and even polarized. Thus, whereas in the Qur'ān's briefly retold story of Cain and Abel this raven, itself the inhabiter of Paradise and courier of God,[10] is sent out to instruct a murderous Cain in the necessity, and thus ultimately the rite, of burying the dead, in the Thamūdic mythopoeia this same Raven of Paradise is the messenger of resurrection, that is, of the awakening of Kānūh from his century-long sleep, an awakening that is not only a return to his own life but also an engendering of new life, that of the Prophet Ṣāliḥ. Viewed in a lighter vein, the Raven of Paradise plays in the Kānūh story the role of Cupid.

With Ṣāliḥ in her womb, Kānūh's wife returned to the Thamūd, and, in due time, on a Friday of the Inviolable, the first month of the year *(shahr al-muḥarram)*, the earth trembled, the wild animals fell prostrate, the idols tumbled to the ground, and Ṣāliḥ was born.

When Ṣāliḥ reached the age of seven, he addressed the Thamūd and manifested to them his lineage. His powers were recognized first when he freed his people from an invading king who every seventh year had been raiding the land. Ṣāliḥ's position was now that of savior and rival to the Thamūd's king. The king at first intended to kill him, but, realizing his power as "hallowed," let him walk amongst his people "venerated and exalted."[11]

Only upon reaching the age of forty years, however, did Ṣāliḥ begin his mission as prophet—and then very much as the precursor of Islam, i.e., establishing the "profession of the faith" *(al-shahādah):* "There is no god but God, and Ṣāliḥ is his Servant and his Prophet." And here, too, began his excoriations of the people's evils and his exhortations against those who "bring corruption to the land."[12]

But the Thamūd did not listen or obey—thus until Ṣāliḥ reached seventy years of age. Then divine patience ran out. "God turned their women sterile, their trees dried up and did not yield fruit, their cows did not calve, and their ewes did not lamb."[13] The Thamūd remained unrepentant, and their domain was turning into a wasteland. In despair over so much recalcitrance, Ṣāliḥ left his people and set out toward the wilderness. There he roamed on the slopes of a mountain until the coming of evening, when he found a fountain, performed his ablutions, performed a prayer, and, like his father before him, entered a cave. In the cave he found a lamp and a golden bed draped in silk. He climbed upon the bed and fell asleep for forty years. God then awakened him, and he returned to his people and to his temple-mosque, which had fallen into ruin.

Thus Ṣāliḥ's last reforming mission begins.[14] He faces the Thamūd and renews the *shahādah;* "There is no god but God, and I am Ṣāliḥ, the messenger of God"; and once again the people are perplexed, the idols fall to the ground, and the beasts of burden speak.[15]

Facing further defiance, Ṣāliḥ performs a miracle by causing a whole family to die in order to resurrect them thereafter. But the people's recalcitrance does not diminish.[16]

Prodded on by Iblīs, the Thamūd challenged Ṣāliḥ further. They demanded of him a miracle like those performed by Hūd and Noah.[17] Ṣāliḥ agreed. Together they went out to a valley where the Thamūd asked their idols for a miracle, and where Ṣāliḥ was to ask for one from his God. Their miracles, or "signs," failed them, however. Of Ṣāliḥ they requested the miracle/"sign" of bringing a she-camel out of a rock. Thus begins the actual story of the "She-Camel of Ṣāliḥ" of the popular legend, or myth, and of the "She-Camel of God"[18] of the Qurʾān.

From the versions of the story we do not know whether the Thamūd had specified their request of a miracle to Ṣāliḥ before or after the failure of their idols. The stories vary even in telling us whether the choice of the miracle of the she-camel came from the Thamūd or from Ṣāliḥ.[19]

According to al-Nuwayrī's narration, the Thamūd were precise and demanding in their description of the requested miracle. They specified that the she-camel be truly of blood, flesh, bone, sinew, skin, and coat of hair; that her color be between white and ruddy, i.e., showing the nobility of breed of the camels termed *ʿīs;* that she be slender of belly, but possess udders like the largest of water-jugs, from which pure milk would stream profusely without need to be drawn off, and that the sick who drink of it be cured and the indigent satisfied; furthermore, that she not pasture on their pasture grounds but instead on mountaintops and in the depths of valleys, leaving the pastures to them; and finally, that she have an offspring colt which should follow her and answer her yearning groans.[20]

To all this Ṣāliḥ agreed, with the reciprocal condition that the miraculous she-camel have sole access to Thamūd's only water source on alternate days. So, too, the Thamūd should have their water to themselves on the remaining days, although on the interim days the Thamūd would enjoy the benefit of the unrestricted bounty of that she-camel's milk.[21]

The stage for Ṣāliḥ's miracle was then set: a canopy or dome formed over a huge rock or hillock and a circle of angels hovered over it. Ṣāliḥ approached the rock and struck it with a rod. The rock shook and began rising, extending ever higher, and then once again stood firm in its place. Convulsions as though of a woman in childbirth seized it. Then it burst open, and there emerged the she-camel as though she, too, were a part of the mountain. "This is the She-Camel of God as a sign for you," proclaimed Ṣāliḥ, "so let her graze in God's earth, and let no one do her harm, lest you be afflicted with a painful punishment."[22] And with the she-camel was her offspring.

Events seem to have developed as stipulated in the conditions. Every second day the she-camel drank all the water of the Thamūd, giving them in return her miraculous milk, and every other day the Thamūd had abundant water to drink and to water their herds. Such agreement and harmony, however, would not last, for in the summertime, when the heat was strong, the she-camel took up the high slopes of the valley, frightening away the Thamūd's herds of cattle large and small, and their camels, and driving them into the sultry heat of the valley floor. In the cold of winter, however, the she-camel sought pasturage at the bottom of the valley, causing the Thamūd's herds to flee high up its slopes. Thus, both summer and winter, the herds of the Thamūd were at the mercy of the strange she-camel. In time, this outweighed for the Thamūd their commitment to their covenant with Ṣāliḥ and the bounty they obtained from the she-camel.

In an atmosphere of conspiracy, the Thamūd decided to kill the she-camel without Ṣāliḥ's knowledge. But Ṣāliḥ anticipated their intention and prophesied to them that of the male offspring born to them in a given month, one, who was also to be "a marked one," would be the cause of their destruction. Nine were born and killed in that month, but a tenth infant, by the name of Qudār, was spared by his father and was allowed to grow up to a precocious and arrogant manhood. The stage for the tragedy was further set by the hatred that two women of the Thamūd harbored for Ṣāliḥ. One was named Ṣadūf. She not only was wealthy in herds of cattle and camels, but was also one of the most beautiful women of the Thamūd. The other was named ʿUnayzah. She was equally wealthy, older than Ṣadūf, and the mother of daughters of great beauty. The two women resolved that the She-Camel of Ṣāliḥ that had caused such disruption of the pasturage of their herds had to be killed. In exchange for a promise to carry out her will, Ṣadūf thus offered herself to one of the young warriors of the Thamūd by the name of Miṣdaʿ, "the Eloquent," and as part of the same design the older ʿUnayzah offered one of her beautiful daughters to Qudār, the youth who was also known as the Red One of Blue Eyes. He, Qudār, was thus equally "the marked one" and the one prophesied by Ṣāliḥ to bring about the destruction of the Thamūd. About him especially legends multiply and diverge. His very name, Qudār, has an ominous, foreboding ring in Arabic: one of "enacted" power as well as of predestined occurrence, thus fate—but fate with a flaw, to which there points even the Arabic morphological-semantic mold of *fuʿāl*, into which the name Qudār falls.[23] His characteristics or epithets of being both "red" and "blue" are in the Arabic symbolic association of colors distinctly negative. They point to the liminal "otherness" of an instrument of destiny.

Qudār's redness should take us as far back as the "coded" insistence on the color red in the biblical story of Esau (Gen. 2:23–34). The biblical text tells us with clear emphasis, or, one should say, with charged intentionality, that Esau, the firstborn over his twin brother Jacob, was born "red" *(admonī)*. He grew up to be the stronger of the twins, a skillful hunter, spending his days in the open fields. Jacob, on the other hand, was "a quiet man, dwelling in tents." The archetypal paradox, or the ideology, of the story decrees, however, that Esau, his father's provider, will for a meal of "red pottage" forswear "his birthright" to Jacob. This is stressed "editorially" first by Yahweh, that "the elder shall serve the younger" (Gen. 25:23), and then by Isaac, the father: "Behold, away from the fatness of the earth shall your dwelling be, and away from the dew of heaven on high. By your sword you shall live, and you shall serve your brother . . ." (Gen. 27:39–40). Thus both divine and paternal curses fall upon the *red* Esau, the eponymic ancestor of the "red" Edomites.[24]

The blueness of Qudār's eyes, through folklore (*al-shayṭān al-azraq*, "the blue devil") and legend, points even more directly (in the Arabic context) to a curse and to the fear of hidden evil, or even to a demonic quality. "And there was blueness in his eyes, as though they were two lenses," says al-Nuwayrī in his role as mythographer.[25] Something ominous is sensed here, reminding us of Zarqāʾ al-Yamāmah (the Blue-eyed One of Yamāmah). She, too, has a "glass-like," or "lens-like, glance" *(mithla z-zujājati)*[26] and her ability to see, although she is cursed not to be believed, is only comparable to the Trojan Cassandra's ability to foresee—especially to foresee the doom impending upon Troy—but not be given credence.[27] Like Cassandra in her seer's knowledge of Odysseus's ruse prepared for the credulous Trojans, Zarqāʾ al-Yamāmah had warned in vain her husband's clan, the Jadīs of Yamāmah, of the approaching army of the Ḥimyarites and of their ruse of carrying a screen of bushes before them—a forest advancing, quite like the "great Birnam Wood coming to Dunsinane."[28]

Returning to the conspiracy of the Thamūd, our compounded qurʾāno-narrative mythopoeia tells us that Miṣdaʿ and Qudār, seduced into action, gather around themselves seven more conspirators and thus become the "nine who spread corruption in the land."[29] Together they set out to "hock" *(ʿaqara)*[30] the she-camel. The prevalent version of the narrative is that it was Qudār who first shot the she-camel with his bow and then, together with Miṣdaʿ, fell upon her with a sword, killing her.[31] The remaining conspirators then joined them and dismembered her. One version of the story then speaks of the conspirators' pursuit of the she-camel's colt, which, warned by its mother, had fled to the top of a mountain and invoked a curse upon the Thamūd. The conspirators, however, chased it down, slaughtered it, and divided its flesh amongst them.[32] In another version, however, the camel-colt, having witnessed its mother's death, runs off till it comes to an inaccessible mountain called Ḍawʾ (light), or, some say, Qārah (black stones, pitch). Ṣāliḥ, in the meantime, is alerted by some repentant Thamūdeans to the attack upon the she-camel. He reaches her too late, however. He then urges those around him to go out and rescue the colt, for if they can reach it perhaps their punishment may be averted. The Thamūd went out searching for the colt and, when they saw it on the mountain, tried to catch it. But God made the mountain rise up to heaven till not even the birds could reach it. Only Ṣāliḥ came up to the colt, and when it saw him, tears streamed from its eyes and it groaned three times, at which the rock split open and the colt entered the mountain. Only then did Ṣāliḥ pronounce his prophecy of doom.[33]

Then, however, he gave the Thamūd a strange respite of three days, saying to them: "Enjoy yourselves in your abode for three days—this is a promise not to be belied."[34] The Qurʾān, and with it the narrative mythopoeic and exegetic sources, fails to clarify the meaning of this would-be grace period of "enjoyment" *(tamattuᶜ)* which is given to the doomed Thamūd. This becomes puzzling. We only know that, as pertains to the qurʾānic text, these enigmatic Thamūd-related occurrences of the motif of "enjoyment" in the context of doom are from that text's "early," still Meccan, period. No self-conscious internal qurʾānic exegesis is in evidence there, although in these Meccan suras we are squarely in the rich thematic area of qurʾānic mythopoeia, which, by its stylistic nature, might have been receptive to expatiation and explanation. When in a later, Medinan, return the Qurʾān (9:68-70) speaks of this motif again, such "enjoyment" (this time in its morphological variant of *istamtaᶜa*) seems to have undergone a certain degree of "clarification." There, for the first time, it is linked further—internally exegetically, as it were—to the word meaning "share of happiness" *(khalāq)*. Matters do not become clearer, however. These later Medinan verses indeed explain *tamattuᶜ* in its general semantics, but they do not clarify its earlier Meccan Thamūdic context, and with it the rationale of the drama; for in the Medinan sura there is no "drama," no punishment already set in motion for an abomination already committed—as is the case of the Meccan texts. In it we find merely the most unparticularized of admonitions that all good things will have their end—of course a deserved end. As such, the phrasing becomes that of "general wisdom" *(ḥikmah)*, for multiple uses, although its ultimate reference, too, is to "the people of Noah, the ᶜĀd, and the Thamūd . . ." (v. 70). The much stranger, argumentatively unforewarned throwing of *tamattuᶜ* into the midst of the tragedy of the Thamūd is not easily explained in this chronologically "postmeditated" (Medinan), textually *ex post facto*, manner.

In the Thamūd context the "enjoyment" of the condemned may, of course, itself invite an easy and almost flippantly plausible psychological explanation as well—that of the "last wish" principle; or even that of gallows humor. It may also be viewed, as the exegetes view it, as a "respite"—although on what grounds and for what purpose remains unarticulated. These, however, do not seem to me to be proper hermeneutical avenues in the qurʾānic-Thamūdic case of *tamattuᶜ*. Rather, I should introduce an element of broader scriptural intertextuality, namely the extended biblical passage in Exodus 32:5–29.

There we read that, while Moses was "on the mountain" receiving the Tablets, there was a restlessness in the camp of the Israelites, and to assuage that restlessness Aaron fashioned "the golden calf." The Israelites sacrificed to it, and then (v. 6) "they sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to *take their pleasure*" [italics mine].[35] Still up on the mountain (v. 10), Yahweh, cognizant of the goings-on below, announces to Moses that he will punish the Israelites for their abomination, ". . . that my wrath may blaze up against them to consume them" (v. 10). Moses succeeds (in a truly forensic manner)[36] in persuading Yahweh to relent in the punishment (vv. 11–14), but, after himself witnessing the abomination, his own rage prevails. He asks Aaron to summon those in the camp that are "for the Lord." "All the Levites rallied to him" (v. 26), and he ordered them to take their swords and go in the camp from gate to gate: "and *slay your own kinsmen, your friends and neighbors*" [italics mine]. Thus the Levites slew "about three thousand of the people" (v. 28) in an act of their own "consecration" (v. 29).

It is important to note the impact of this account on the further biblical narrative, and mythopoeia, of the Israelites' wandering in the Sinai. For we find events analogous to those narrated in Exodus 32:25–29 very closely rephrased in Numbers 25:1–9. In that latter variant, whose "chronology" is posterior, placing it during the Israelites' sojourn among the Midianites, Moses orders the Judges of Israel to slay those of their men who have joined themselves to Baal; and, as it were, underlining and specifying the abomination, it is Aaron's grandson, the Levite Pinehas, who with his spear transfixes an Israelite and a Midianite woman during their carnal embrace.

The Israelites' abominations were thus twofold: to their *taking other gods* and their idol worship there is added the *immediate* cause of punishment, which is their reveling and indulging in the sin of carnality with Midianite women—the *pleasure* factor.[37]

In a manner that has the effect almost of an editorial intervention and "emendation" that is meant to take, at least in part, the human hand out of a story that ends with the death of 24,000 Israelites—and which can hardly be anything other than a variant of Exodus 32:22-29—verses 8 and 9 of Numbers 25 introduce instead a second, divine executor of punishment in the form of the plague.

In a structural sense, the primary observation to be made here is that in both cases of the Mosaic/Levite blotting out of abomination (Exodus and Numbers), extermination is preceded by *enjoyment*, and the fact and structural placement of that enjoyment are insisted upon most firmly—so much so that even in the much later context of St. Paul's 1 Corinthians 10:1-11, where reference to these biblical texts is made, the warning "not to put the Lord to the test" (v. 9)[38] is connected with the abomination of idolatry. Above all, it brings to the mind of the author of the Epistle the circumstance in which the Israelites had "taken their pleasure" first and then were slain (v. 8).

Even when taking into separate consideration the non-Thamūdic occurrences in the Qur'ān of the word/motif of *tamattu*ᶜ, we are able to establish a common denominator there as well. For there *tamattu*ᶜ is also invariably preceded by the abomination of turning to "other gods" and is followed by the threat of final punishment—thus in Qur'ān 39:8, 14:30, 16:55, and 30:34 (all of them Meccan). *Tamattu*ᶜ and punishment, we find, are thus an indivisible structural whole there too. In the context of the qur'ānic Thamūd story, however, where it occurs at the point of highest dramatic intensity and narrative urgency, and where there is obviously some higher degree of specificity, *tamattu*ᶜ must be afforded its broader hermeneutically and literary-critically indispensable intertextuality, which ought to be, ultimately, that of

Exodus and Numbers, in order for that qur'ānic *tamattu*ᶜ to be appreciated rather than hesitantly—and invariably with a touch of bemusement—accepted.

And a further problem of affinities, both textual and ideological (albeit extra-Thamūdic): Mild in comparison to the single-minded horror of Levitic "consecration" must appear the profession of loyalty—equally a consecration—of Ḥassān Ibn Thābit, the Prophet Muḥammad's most vocal poet-apologist. He offers the Prophet his property and his life, and "to wage war against all and everyone of the people whom he [the Prophet] regards as enemy—even if it be against the beloved, most sincere friend." In both cases it is the same abstract ideology that prevails even over the traditionally most sacred and cherished ties of blood and custom. Thus we know that, in both cases, a new "covenant" has set in.[39]

Even the qur'ānic retelling of Exodus 32:5-29 and Numbers 25:1-9 in the Sura of al-Baqarah, vv. 54-55 and 57-59, as properly observed by some interpreters—but obviously also apologists[40]—appears mild by comparison with its textual predecessor in the way it presents its Arabic version of the Levitic "consecration" scene and the ultimate harshness that underlies the ideological commitment: "And kill your own selves *[your own kind]!* This will be better for you with [before] your Maker."[41] The slaughter of the scene in Numbers 25:1-9 is also in its entirety "mercifully" given over in the Qur'ān to a "plague," or to "punishment of pollution from the sky/heaven" *(rijzan min as-samā'i).*[42] Here, too, the accepted (exegetical?) qur'ānic reading (and understanding) of the key word *rijz* as "filth," "pollution," and some nondescript "punishment" comes suspiciously close to implying the abomination of carnality in Numbers 25:6-8; although it should, perhaps, be taken back to the more likely, and stronger, etymology of the root *r-j-z,* which, although phonetically close to *r-j-s* and that root's more nearly proper meaning of "pollution" and "filth," nevertheless possesses in a primary sense the meaning of "[rhythmic] motion," "intermittent roar," and "tremor."[43] We would then have here, once again, a much more characteristic, both stylistically and mythopoeically plausible, punishment with a "tremor" (or an earthquake) in the best qur'ānic tradition relative to the core of the Thamūdic texts.

With the above in mind, we need to consider the now enriched semantics of that particular Hebrew word/term which, *mutatis* *mutandis,* we propose, corresponds to the Arabic word/term of *tamattu*ᶜ in the qur'ānic and exegetic-mythopoetic texts of the Thamūdic legend. For this we shall invoke the hermeneutic efficacy of Numbers 25:1-9 with its clear evidencing of a connection between the two causes of punishment measured out to the Israelites: that of taking other gods and that of falling prey to contaminating carnality expressed in the "pleasure factor." Then, with Numbers 25:1-9 in mind, we shall also turn once more to our primary motival model, Exodus 32:5-29, and specifically to verse six. There we shall take cognizance of the actual terminological Hebrew referent to the "pleasure factor," the word *ẓaḥeq* of *wayyaqemū le ẓaḥeq,* to be understood as "and they rose to take their pleasure," or, as it is more customarily translated (The Revised Standard Version), "and [they] rose up to play"—for, indeed, the verb *ẓaḥeq* means in one sense "to play," while in its main sense, which is also that of the Arabic *ḍaḥika,* it means "to laugh." This the dictionaries of classical Hebrew ascertain fully; but they equally ascertain that, aside from "to laugh," *ẓaḥeq* also means "to fondle (erotically)," as in Genesis 26:8 ("and [Abimelekh] saw Isaac *(Yiẓḥaq)* fondling *(meẓaḥeq)* Rebekah his wife").[44] We thus may not exclude the "pleasure factor" in its fuller semantics from either Numbers 25:1-9 or Exodus 32:6.[45] The strange respite of *tamattu*ᶜ of three days, which the prophet of the Thamūd, Ṣāliḥ, gave to his intractable people, was thus an ancient and scripturally-textually diversely extrapolatable respite.

We know further that Ṣāliḥ had warned the Thamūd that on each of the three days of the respite the color of their faces would change: from yellow, to red, to black. And, indeed, on the morning of the first day, the Thamūd woke up and saw that there where the She-Camel had set her pads pools of blood had sprung up, and when they looked at each other, they saw themselves turned yellow. This, however, did not frighten them, but only incensed them in their anger toward Ṣāliḥ. But on the second day their faces turned red, and on the third, black. Now they knew that their fate was sealed. Before sunrise of the fourth day, which fell on a Sunday, they embalmed themselves and prepared themselves for their final hour and for the punishment. When the rays of the sun appeared, there came upon them from the sky a portentous scream, "within which was the sound of every thunderbolt and the voice of everything that had a voice."[46] Then there rose from underground a violent tremor, and all that breathed perished, all motion ceased, voices fell silent, and what was to happen happened. As lifeless corpses the Thamūd remained as though perched in their abodes.[47] And above their abodes there hung a black cloud from which fire rained down upon them for seven days, till all became ashes. On the eighth day the cloud cover broke, and the sun emerged. Then Ṣāliḥ and those of the faithful who had remained with him picked up what they could carry of their possessions and journeyed toward the land of Shām, where they settled in Palestine. There Ṣāliḥ lived until the end of his days.[48]

NOTES

Introduction

1. See the fluctuating aspect of that critical receptivity in Jaroslav Stetkevych, "Arabic Poetry and Assorted Poetics," in Malcolm H. Kerr, ed., *Islamic Studies: A Tradition and Its Problems* (Malibu, California: Undena Publications, 1980), pp. 103–23.

2. Northrop Frye, *The Great Code* (New York/London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982), p. xviii.

3. Thus the prophet Zakarīyā's, his wife's, and his son Yaḥyā's relationship to God is that of *raghaban wa rahaban*—of "aspiration and awe" (Qurʾān 21:90). Current in the Qurʾān are also the terms *rāhib* in its plural form, *ruhbān,* with its accepted meaning of "anchorites" (Qurʾān 9:31), and *rahbānīyah* ("anchoritism"/"monasticism") (Qurʾān 57:27). The term *rāhib* should, however, be connected "institutionally" with our archaic meaning of *rahbah;* for *rāhib* ought to have meant something like a "supplicant" (at court) and a "servant" in one sense, and in another sense an *ʿabd or kāhin* (a servant/minister). In both senses he *(rāhib)* is one who "approaches in awe"—thus, initially, not the one who "withdraws." This relation of *raghbah* to *rahbah* then receives in al-Jāḥiẓ's (d. 255/868) incipient political thought its synonymic hermeneutics through the tension in the "pairing" of *mahābah/maḥabbah* ("awe"/"love"). See Abū ʿUthmān ʿAmr Ibn Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ, *Al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn,* 4 vols., ed. ʿAbd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn, 5th ed. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1405/1985) 3:115.

4. Qurʾān 11:49.

5. Qurʾān 26:214; 9:24; 58:22.

6. *Mathalu l-jannati l-latī wuʿida l-muttaqūna fīhā anhārun min māʾin ghayri āsinin . . . wa anhārun min khamrin ladhdhatin li-sh-shāribīna . . .,* Qurʾān 47:15.

7. *Inna l-abrāra la fī naʿīmin / ʿalā l-arāʾiki yanẓurūna / taʿrifu fī wujūhihim naḍrata n-naʿīmi / yusqawna min raḥīqin makhtūmin / khitāmuhu miskun wa fī dhālika fal-yatanāfas il-mutanāfisūna / wa mizājuhu min tasnīmin / ʿaynan tashrabu bihā l-muqarrabūna,* Qurʾān 83:22–28. To be noted here further is the term *al-muqarrabūn* (v. 28), literally "the ones brought near," but originally (terminologically) "courtiers," "favorites," etc., as borrowed from imperial/royal courtly institutions and customs.

8. See Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, "Intoxication and Immortality: Wine and Associated Imagery in al-Maʿarrī's Garden," in Fedwa Malti-Douglas, ed., *Critical Pilgrimages: Studies in the Arabic Literary Tradition. Literature East and West* 25 (1989): 31–43.

9. Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies,* ed. S. M. Stern, trans. C. R. Barber and S. M. Stern (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1967), p. 202 ("What Is Meant by 'Al-Jāhiliyya'").

10. This verse (Qur'ān 48:26), which refers itself to the changing moods that led to the truce, and treaty, of Ḥudaybīyah, also antiposes to *ḥamīyat al-jāhilīyah* the term *sakīnah* ("tranquility," "calmness," "gentleness"), which, let there be no doubt, is in this case a self-conscious choice of synonym for the pre-Islamic Bedouin "balancing" virtue of *ḥilm* ("gentleness," "clemency," "mildness," "forbearance," "indulgence," "patience," "understanding," "discernment") opposite *jahl.* Just as the specific *jahl* does not occur in the Qur'ān, neither does *ḥilm*—although one of the important epithetic names of Allāh is its adjectival derivative, *ḥalīm.*

11. Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals Speak: Pre-Islamic Poetry and the Poetics of Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 207-10.

12. Luwīs ʿAwaḍ, *Usṭūrat Ūrist wa al-Malāḥim al-ʿArabīyah* (Cairo: Dār al-Kātib al-ʿArabī li al-Ṭibāʿah wa al-Nashr, 1968), pp. 7, 45, 88. Technically, the relationship between the clans of Bakr and Taghlib is that of paternal cousins *(abnā' al-ʿamm).* This is also reflected in Luwīs ʿAwaḍ's discussion (p. 7). My present intention is to uncover the archetype rather than to dwell on the genealogical complexities, especially of the name Taghlib. I would only, at this point, side with Nöldeke's (*ZDMG,* xl [1886], p. 169) philologically sound consideration that Taghlib is originally a collective term which qualifies the whole tribe as "prevailing," or "victorious." The "matrilineal" speculation based on the understanding of *taghlib* as "*she* prevails" (W. Robertson Smith, *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia* [Oosterhout N. B., Netherlands: Anthropological Publications, 1966], pp. 13ff., and 253ff.), as reflected in some early Arabic verse, is also tempting, although it is philologically not decisive and genealogically suspect. For the classical Arabic genealogies and their sources, see art. "Taghlib" by H. Kindermann in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (First Edition), and art. "Bakr b. Wā'il" by W. Caskel in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (New Edition).

13. See further, S. Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals Speak,* pp. 199-205.

14. Goldziher, *Muslim Studies,* pp. 202-03. Otherwise, while acknowledging "that in the old language, too, we find the concept of knowledge *(ʿilm)* contrasted to *jahl,* . . . this opposition is founded on a secondary meaning of *jahl.*" Same, p. 203.

15. *La'in kuntu muḥtājan ilā l-ḥilmi innanī*
ilā l-jahli fi baʿḍi l-aḥāyīni aḥwaju
Wa mā kuntu arḍā l-jahla khidnan wa ṣāḥiban
wa lākinnanī arḍā bihī ḥīna uḥraju
Fa in qāla qawmun inna fihī samāḥatan
fa qad ṣadaqū wa dh-dhullu bi l-ḥurri asmaju
Wa lī farasun li l-ḥilmi bi l-ḥilmi muljamun
wa lī farasun li l-jahli bi l-jahli musraju
Fa man shā'a taqwīmī fa innī muqawwamun
wa man shā'a taʿwījī fa innī muʿawwaju

Abū ʿUmar Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih al-Andalusī, *Kitāb al-ʿIqd al-Farīd,* 3d ed., 7 vols., eds. Aḥmad Amīn, Aḥmad al-Zayn, Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Lajnat al-Ta'līf wa al-Tarjamah wa al-Nashr, 1367/1948) 3:14. This source refers to the author of these lines as "and another [poet] said" *(wa qāla ākharu).* Without giving a precise textual reference, Goldziher [*Muslim Studies,* p. 204] quotes only lines 1, 4, and 5 of this short poem (or, itself, a poetic fragment), as does his likely source, Abū ʿUbayd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn ʿUmrān al-Marzubānī, *Muʿjam al-Shuʿarāʾ* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qudsī, A.H. 1354), pp. 429-30.

The translation given on pages 8-9 of the present text, and all other translations appearing without other attribution, are my own.

16. Muṣṭafā Nāṣif, *Qirāʾah Thāniyah li Shiʿrinā al-Qadīm* ([Tripoli, Libya]: Manshūrāt al-Jāmiʿah al-Lībīyah, Kullīyat al-Ādāb, n.d.).

17. See Jacob Lassner, *The Demonization of the Queen of Sheba* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994).

18. See Jaroslav Stetkevych, "Confluence of Arabic and Hebrew Literature," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 32, nos. 1 & 2 (Jan.-April 1973), p. 220.

19. Further on the myth/legend of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, see below, chapter 2 n. 7.

20. See further, Jaroslav Stetkevych, *The Zephyrs of Najd: The Poetics of Nostalgia in the Classical Arabic Nasīb* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 168-70.

21. See also S. Stetkevych, "Intoxication and Immortality," pp. 40-41.

Chapter 1

1. Virgil [Vergil], *Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid,* Trans. H. Rushton Fairclough (The Loeb Classical Library), 2 vols. (Cambridge, Massachusetts/London: Harvard University Press, 1994/1986), Vol. 1 [*Aeneid* VI, 186-89, 203-04], pp. 518/519-520/521.

2. Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī: Jāmiʿ al-Bayān ʿan Taʾwīl Āy al-Qurʾān,* 16 vols., eds. Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākir and Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif bi Miṣr, 1957) 12:538-39; Ibn Kathīr [ʿImād al-Dīn Abū al-Fidā Ismāʿīl Ibn ʿUmar al-Qurashī al-Dimashqī], *Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah fī al-Tārīkh,* 14 vols. (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Kurdistān al-ʿIlmīyah li Nashr al-Kutub al-ʿĀliyah al-Islāmīyah, A.H. 1348) 1:137, and *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ* ([Cairo?]: Dār Nahr al-Nīl, n.d. [1981?]), p. 123; Ibn Isḥāq Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Ibrāhīm al-Thaʿlabī, *Kitāb Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ al-Musammā bi al-ʿArāʾis* (Cairo: Al-Maṭbaʿah al-Kāstalīyah, A.H. 1298), p. 62; A. J. Wensinck and J. P. Mensing, et al., *Concordance et indices de la Tradition Musulmane: Les Six Livres, Le Musnad dʾal-Dārimī, Le Muwattaʾ de Mālik, Le Musnad de Ahmad Ibn Hanbal* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1962 [photo-offset of 1936-1943 edition]) 4:519 (from Abū Dāwūd, ch. 41 [*imārah*]).

3. What we characterize here as a "folkloric manner" in a *ḥadīth* is also recognizable as a stylistic trait of a number of the shorter qurʾānic suras, such as 77:13-14; 82:17-18; 83:8-9, 19-20; 86:1-3; 90:11-13; 97:1-3; 101:1-3, 9-11; 104:4-6.

4. The importance of this "place of burial" in the disentanglement of the complexity of the persona of Abū Righāl will be discussed in chapter 4.

5. Entirely, or in part, this episode is told by al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr* 12:538; Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah* 1:137, and *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ*, pp. 122-23; and

al-Thaᶜlabī, *Kitāb Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā*ʾ, pp. 61-62, although without the introduction of Muḥammad's passing by a grave and asking his people the rhetorical question. Instead, al-Thaᶜlabī's narration of the incident comes entirely integrated into the story of Ṣāliḥ and the Thamūd. It is altogether odd, or rather symptomatic, that S. A. Bonebakker, in his entry on Abū Righāl, should have totally failed to take notice of the existence of as strange an object as a golden bough found in the grave of Abū Righāl. See S. A. Bonebakker, art. "Abū Righāl," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (New Ed.), ed. H. A. R. Gibb et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill; London: Luzak and Co., 1960-).

6. Al-Thaᶜlabī, *Kitāb Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā*ʾ, p. 62.

7. Muḥammad Ibn ᶜUmar Ibn Wāqid, *Kitāb al-Maghāzī li al-Wāqidī*, 3 vols., ed. Mārisdin Jūns [Marsden Jones] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966) 3:1008.

8. For a discussion of the ultimate implications of the qurʾānic cyclic scheme, see my "Arabic Hermeneutical Terminology: Paradox and the Production of Meaning," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 48 no. 2 (April 1989), p. 84.

9. Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr* 12:524-47; Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah* 1:130-39; and, more closely keyed to the Qurʾān, Ibn Kathīr, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā*ʾ, pp. 112-27; Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn ᶜAbd al-Wahhāb al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab fī Funūn al-Adab*, 31 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīyah, 1342/1924-1374/1955; Al-Hayʾah al-Miṣrīyah al-ᶜĀmmah li al-Kitāb, 1412/1992) 13:71-86; al-Thaᶜlabī, *Kitāb Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā*ʾ, pp. 57-62; Muḥammad Ibn ᶜAbd Allāh al-Kisāʾī, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā*ʾ, ed. Isaac Eisenberg (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1922/23), pp. 117-21. See also the English translation, *The Tales of the Prophets of al-Kisā*ʾ*ī*, Translated from the Arabic with Notes by W. M. Thackston, Jr. (Boston: Twayne Publishers/G. K. Hall and Co., 1978), pp. 117-28.

Chapter 2

1. *ᶜAdam idrāk li al-zamān wa al-makān*, see Jawād ᶜAlī, *Al-Mufaṣṣal fī Tārīkh al-ᶜArab qabl al-Islām*, 10 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-ᶜIlm li al-Malāyīn/Baghdad: Maktabat al-Nahḍah, 1969) 1:75.

2. Bernard F. Batto, *Slaying the Dragon: Mythmaking in the Biblical Tradition* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), p. 123.

3. Abū Jaᶜfar Muḥammad Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī: Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, 11 vols., ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo: Dār al-Maᶜārif bi Miṣr, 1960) 1:314.

4. Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab* 13:73; and al-Kisāʾī, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā*ʾ, p. 111 [English translation, p. 118]. This quotation from the Qurʾān (*jāʾa l-ḥaqqu wa zahaqa l-bāṭilu inna l-bāṭila kāna zahūqan* [17:81]) is unrelatable to the story of the Thamūd, unless it is to be taken as a "figura." In its correct, not mythopoeically adapted, context it merely announces, or confirms, the institution of the obligatory daily prayers.

5. Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab* 13:73.

6. We easily recognize in the Thamūdic (or would-be Thamūdic) Kānūh, as Ṣāliḥ's father is named in the Arabic mythopoeic texts, a cognate of the Hebrew, as well as Aramaic, *kohen* (priest)—together with the

archaic Arabic term of *kāhin* (priest), which perhaps ought to occupy the primary place in our etymological awareness. Furthermore, in the entire scene in which Kānūh is introduced, we are given an Arabic variant of the archetypal motif most iconically represented in the Christian annunciation. In the Thamūdic/Arabian case, however, it is the male who is the receiver of "the good tidings," bearing in it a sign that is both physiological and a testimony to having communicated with divinity. Also compare Kānūh's annunciation with that of Sarah (Genesis 18:9-15, and Qurʾān 11:69-74), as well as with Zachariah (Luke 1:8-24) and Mary (Luke 1:26-38). In a special way, treading the thinnest of lines between being outright earthy and mystical-symbolic, the episode of the particular glow that radiates from the eyes of Kānūh and issues from the fecundating stirrings in the marrow of his spine should be placed side by side with the hagiographic story told by Ibn Isḥāq, the source of Ibn Hishām, of how the Prophet Muḥammad was fathered and conceived. In it, as Muḥammad's father, ʿAbd Allāh, approaches his wife Āminah, the woman to become Muḥammad's mother, he too bears a sign on his face: the "light" of a blaze on his forehead. After the union, which leads to Muḥammad's conception, the blaze disappears. See Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Malik Ibn Hishām, *Al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyah,* 4 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr li al-Ṭibāʿah wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawzīʿ, 1980) 1:173-74; and, with only minor textual variation, Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Malik Ibn Hishām, *Al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyah li Ibn Hishām,* 6 vols., ed. Ṭāhā ʿAbd al-Raʾūf Saʿd (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1411/1991) 1:292-93. This Muḥammadan hagiographic parallel with Kānūh, his wife, and the conception of the Thamūdic prophet Ṣāliḥ is of particular importance to us, for it will substantiate and clarify our further analogies pertinent to Ṣāliḥ and Muḥammad.

7. Kānūh's refuge in a magic cave and his sleep in it for one hundred years is to be put into the Qurʾān's own mythopoeic context of the Companions of the Cave *(Aṣḥāb al-Kahf),* Qurʾān 18:9-26, and their sheltered three hundred and nine year sleep. The qurʾānic version of the story of the Sleepers has in turn its origin in the legend of the "Seven Sleepers of Ephesus," which, in its internal textual reference points, dates back to the mid-third century, the time of persecution of Christians under the Emperor Decius. In its Christian context the legend acquires a distinct hagiographic character, and in the sixth century a shrine of the Sleepers of Ephesus is known to have existed as a place of worship. According to the Qurʾān (8:21), too, a mosque is erected over the Companions of the Cave. See especially P. Michael Huber, *Die Wanderlegende von den Siebenschläfern* (Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1910), p. 237-38; and, generally, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (New Edition), art. "Aṣḥāb al-Kahf."

8. Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab* 13:73.

9. Qurʾān 5:34. It is interesting to note that what in the Qurʾān is a "story" of burial is here a story of awakening, or, as it were, of resurrection. Then, too, see al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab* 13:74; and al-Kisāʾī, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ,* p. 112 [English translation, p. 119].

10. In his *Vögel als Boten* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1977), Othmar Keel devotes much attention to the mythological figuration of the raven/crow as the guide- or orientation-bird. He begins with the Early-Dynastic II (ca. 2600 B.C.) Mesopotamian cylinder seal from Fara (Shuruppak), which is interpreted as representing Gilgamesh holding in his hand the

plant, or branch, of youthful immortality, seated in a boat opposite Utnapishtim. Behind him there stands a boatman (Urshanabi [?]), while over the boat's stern there either flies or perches a raven (pp. 83, 85). Callimachus of Cyrene (d. ca. 240 B.C.), in his *Second Hymn,* addressed to Apollo, praises the god, who, as a raven, guides his people to Libya. Inasmuch as the journey involved the crossing of the sea, Apollo the Raven is in it clearly the "orientation-bird" (p. 83). So too was Alexander the Great guided by two ravens to the Ammon oracle in the oasis of Shiva (p. 82). Keel provides equally persuasive examples from early (first century B.C.) Indian maritime travels in which the raven was taken on the ships because of its ability to orient, that is, guide, the seafarers.

Continuing after Callimachus with Ovid, we return to the raven as the messenger of the god Apollo, and thus as the inhabiter of a Paradise-like sphere. There this Greek mythical raven had once been whiter than snowy doves, swans, and even geese. As Apollo's bird, it had the misfortune, however, to have once come upon an indiscretion of the beautiful Coronis of Larissa, a maiden whose love Apollo had taken for himself and of whose faithfulness he entertained an unjustified illusion. When, in his straightforwardness as messenger, the raven, against every better judgment, informed Apollo of Coronis's unfaithfulness, the god in his rage not only killed the girl but also changed the raven's color to black and banished it forever from the company of all white birds (Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* trans. Rolfe Humphries [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964], pp. 45–48 [2: 539–631]). From then on the raven remained the bird of ill omen and of separation.

In the Mithraic myth the raven is confirmed in its Apollonian connection. There the "servitor of the Sun" sends the raven to Mithra as the messenger that bears the command to slay the bull. In the comparison between the two ravens, the Apollonian and the Mithraic, we have to keep in mind the "Apollonian" unified solar divinity as against the Mithraic division into two complementary divine personae. Not entirely to be separated from being the solar messenger, in the Mithraic mysteries, too, the raven constitutes the first of the seven stages of initiation. See Franz Cumont, *The Mysteries of Mithra,* trans. Thomas J. McCormack (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1956), pp. 152, 154–55.

Bearing still recognizable Apollonian characteristics, in the Arabic mythopoeia which grew, one might say, exegetically, out of the qur'ānic narrative paucity of the Noah story, the raven/*ghurāb* is also the "failed" messenger bird. The cause of its failure, however, is not excessive zeal, as was the case of Apollo's raven, but its being remiss in bringing Noah the news of the abatement of the flood. It became distracted by a carcass floating on the flood waters and failed to return. For that it was punished to remain a bird of distance and separation from man—as well as being condemned to announce the inevitability of separation among men. The opposite is then the role and the mythopoeic and literary fate of Noah's other messenger, the dove. See al-Thaʿlabī, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ,* p. 50; Kamāl al-Dīn al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-Ḥayawān al-Kubrā wa bi Hāmishihā ʿAjāʾib al-Makhlūqāt wa al-Ḥayawānāt wa Gharāʾib al-Mawjūdāt* by Zakariyā Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Maḥmūd al-Qazwīnī, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, n.d. [photo offset of the ed. Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Ḥijāzī, A.H. 1353]) 2:172–74.

11. "Hallowed" is here *maʿṣūm* and "venerated and exalted," *mukarraman muʿaẓẓaman,* both being with full intentionality used as "prophetic" epithets, thus resonating with Muḥammad's "names"/epithets. Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab* 13:75.

12. That is, *alladhīna yufsidūna fi-l-arḍi.* See al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab* 13:76; and Qurʾān 26:152; or 27:48. An important general observation in this context should be that "bringing corruption to the land" appears to be the main accusation cast against the Thamūd. This should allow us to place its symbolic meaning within the broad archetypal scope of vegetation symbolism, the "wasteland," the Fisher King, etc..

13. Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab* 13:77.

14. Too many lateral issues of incidental and tangential symbolism (but even then of a possible cumulative coherence) are surging here for us to even try to give them justice within the limitations of our present essay. It is sufficient to note how archetypal is Ṣāliḥ's "setting out toward the wilderness," and how it falls into patterns such as those of John the Baptist and Christ. Equally archetypal is Ṣāliḥ's entering the cave, his prophetic sleep/gestation of forty years, and even his "golden bed" and the lamp-candelabra. With regard to the last, we may think of the Fisher King of the Grail saga, but also of the buried golden bough itself.

15. Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab* 13:78.

16. Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab* 13:79.

17. Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab* 13:79. As much as we know of the "miracle of Noah," which is the building of the Ark, we know nothing of a specific "miracle of Hūd." In Qurʾān 11:53, 54 the people of ʿĀd even say to Hūd's face: "O Hūd, no clear sign have you brought us." Only Hūd's prophecy of ʿĀd's annihilation and their replacement by another people can, therefore, be the "miracle." The actual "story" of their annihilation is given, once again, more picturesquely and exhaustively in al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab* 13:56.

18. Thus in Qurʾān 7:73; 91:13; etc.

19. Compare, for example, the narration of al-Nuwayrī (*Nihāyat al-Arab* 13:79) with that of al-Ṭabarī (*Tafsīr* 12:525).

20. Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab* 13:79.

21. Such is the account of al-Thaʿlabī's *Kitāb Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ* (p. 58), and the same meaning may also be construed from al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* (12:526). In al-Nuwayrī's *Nihāyat al-Arab* (13:80), on the other hand, even the watering of the She-Camel on alternate days remains one of the specific conditions presented by the Thamūd.

22. Ṣāliḥ's words in the narration are a quotation from Qurʾān 7:73.

23. Aside from there being a good reason for the exploration of Qudār's etymologies based on morphologically determined semantics, and even on "folk-associative" usages, our main approach must ultimately be that of concrete etymology within the root *q/k-dh/d-r* and *kh-ḍ-r,* not excluding Hebrew etymological aspects. Most of all, see below (ch. 6, "Demythologizing the Thamūd"), the validation of etymology in the "historicity" of *qudār*/Qudār.

24. The formulaic character of such essentially ideological "in-text" hermeneutics is also evident in the other Genesis "pairing" of Cain and Abel (Gen. 4), or in the ideologically even more transparent distribution of patrimony and curse among the sons of Noah (Gen. 9:24-26). The

Romulus and Remus parallel is also obvious. In its myth-making and ideological aspects the latter receives its perhaps most comprehensive treatment in T. P. Wiseman, *Remus: A Roman Myth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

25. *Wa kāna fī ʿaynayhi zurqatun ka anna humā ʿadasatāni.* Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab* 13:83.

26. *Mithla zujājatin.* See al-Nābighah al-Dhubyānī, *Dīwān,* redaction of Ibn al-Sikkīt, ed. Shukrī Fayṣal (Beirut: Dār al-Hāshim, 1968), pp. 14-16 (rhymed in *dāl,* esp. v. 28). See further ʿAmr Ibn Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān,* 8 vols., ed. ʿAbd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1938) 6:331.

27. Of importance to us primarily is Cassandra's role in *Aeneid* 2:246-49. In myth to be a "seer," or to become a "seer," comes, unavoidably, very dearly. Through her preference of a mortal over a god—in this case termed mythographically as "unfaithfulness"—Cassandra, for having thus defied Apollo, who had given her the gift of prophecy, has to live with the agony of ignored prophecy and, ultimately, of witnessing the destruction of Troy. To expatiate further on Cassandra's Arabian analogue: Zarqāʾ al-Yamāmah, alienated from her kin by being married into a clan (Jadīs) hostile to her own (Ṭasm), although she detects the camouflaged advancing Ḥimyarites from a distance of three days' march, is not believed by the Jadīs. Yamāmah falls, the Jadīs are put to the sword, and Zarqāʾ al-Yamāmah's eyes are plucked out by the king of the conquering Ḥimyarites. See Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī Ibn al-Ḥusayn Ibn ʿAlī al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab wa Maʿādin al-Jawhar,* 4 vols., ed. Yūsuf Asʿad Dāghir (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus li al-Ṭibāʿah wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawzīʿ, 1401/ 1981) 2:117-19.

28. *Macbeth,* Act IV Scene 1 and Act V Scene 5.

29. Qurʾān 27:48.

30. To "hock" or "hamstring" *(ʿaqara)* an animal, especially a camel, is not only a complex word in the Arabic lexicon; it is, above all, a complex *term* in the earliest Arabic language of ritual and sacrifice, for it is the first step in the procedure of slaughtering an animal which in some form, explicitly or implicitly, is offered, or consumed, in a ritualized manner. This applies most closely and most variedly to pre-Islamic Arabia. Thus also the subsequent Muḥammadan injunction against the pre-Islamic Arabian funerary and commemorative custom of slaughtering camels at the graves of kinsmen: "There shall be no slaughtering [i.e. hocking] of camels in Islam" *(lā ʿaqra fī l-islām).* The "hocking" *(ʿaqr)* was thus the bringing down of the animal (sacrificial), followed by the slaying (cutting of the throat). Terminologically, however, such "hocking" also took over the meaning of the full procedure of the killing of the animal. And, more than that, when employed, it gave the slaughtering of the animal the implicit sense of something endowed with "significance": sacrificial, ritual, or even figuratively related to sacrificial and ritual. For the broad semantic scope of the verb *ʿaqara,* albeit with tighter lexicographical focus and circumscription, see Edward William Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon,* 8 vols. (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1958 [London, 1863]) 5:2107-08. See also below, ch. 4 n. 11.

31. Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab* 13:83.

32. Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab* 13:83.

33. Al-Thaʿlabī, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ*, p. 60; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab* 13:84.

34. Qurʾān 11:65; and, in another version, 51:43.

35. There are differing translations of *wayyaqemū leẓaḥeq* (Exodus 32:6), such as "and rose up to play" (Revised Standard Version), or "and rose up to make merry" (The Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text [Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1955]). Not only is one uncomfortable with "playing" and "making merry" in this uncomplicated way, but the insistence on translating *wayyaqemū* as "and *rose*" seems hardly tenable, since this verb may function here only in a manner similar to that of the Arabic verbs of "beginning," "undertaking," as well as "occurring." In the translation of this verse, I diverge from both the RSV and the Masoretic Text translations.

36. This "forensic manner" of Moses reappears almost as a caricature in the Ḥadīth, when, in the story of Muḥammad's Night Journey and Ascension *(al-isrāʾ wa al-miʿrāj)*, the figure of Moses appears to Muḥammad, advising him how to bargain down with God the number of obligatory prayers. Thus the number of daily prayers required of Muslims was set at a merciful five rather than God's original imposition of fifty. See Abū al-Ḥusayn Muslim Ibn al-Ḥajjāj al-Qushayrī al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim,* 6 vols. (Cairo: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Kutub al-ʿArabīyah: ʿĪsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa Shurakāhu, 1955) 1:145–47 [*ḥadīth* no. 259].

37. In this scene even Pinehas's choice of a spear with which to transfix the Midianite woman's belly begs for a Freudian reading.

38. The sin of "putting the Lord to a test" is one of the most important motifs of the qurʾānic/Thamūdic story itself, where the "She-Camel of God" (and of Ṣāliḥ) is herself given as a *fitnah* ("test") (Qurʾān 54:27).

39. See Ḥassān Ibn Thābit, *Sharḥ Dīwān Ḥassān Ibn Thābit,* recension of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Barqūqī (Cairo: Al-Maktabah al-Tijārīyah al-Kubrā, 1347/1929), p. 426. Concerning another biblical text, this intransigence in the service of a new, or renewed, "covenant" in the Israelite Yahwist case has, in the laconic wording of Bernard M. Levinson, "Understandably . . . long troubled scholars." For his discussion of Deuteronomy 13:6-11/13:7-12 see his "'But You Shall Surely Kill Him': The Text-Critical and Neo-Assyrian Evidence for MT Deuteronomy 13:10," in Georg Braulik, ed., *Bundesdokument und Gesetz: Studien zum Deuteronomium* (Freiburg, Basel, Vienna, Barcelona, Rome, New-York: Herder, 1995), pp. 37-63.

With textual references to Neo-Assyrian treaties, Levinson reaches the unavoidable conclusion that contextualizes the Deuteronomy text (as much as it does that of Ḥassān Ibn Thābit): "Absolute loyalty to the sovereign requires the sacrifice of all other loyalties. Anyone undermining that primary commitment must summarily be executed" (p. 60).

40. Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qurʾan. Text, Translation and Commentary*, 2d ed. (New York: Tahrike Tarsile Qurʾan, Inc., 1988), p. 30.

41. *Fa -qtulū anfusakum dhālikum khayrun lakum ʿinda bāriʾikum.* Qurʾān 2:54.

42. Qurʾān 2:59

43. The root *r-j-s,* in turn, has itself carried over from *r-j-z* the meaning of "commotion." Thus these two roots ended up developing their common, polysemically intertwined semantic field.

44. Wilhelm Gesenius, *Hebräisches und aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament* (Berlin, Göttingen, Heidelberg: Springer Verlag, 1954), p. 680 ("*liebkosen mit einem Weibe*"). See also the complete context of Genesis 39:14, as it, too, refers itself to "sexual advances." Cf. the Arabic Third Form of *laᶜiba.*

45. It is for that reason that the problem of the semantics of *ẓaḥeq* has led Hebrew exegesis and lexicography to associating its root *ẓ-ḥ-q* with the root, and the semantics, of *s-ḥ-q*, to be taken, in Gesenius's coy phrasing, *im üblen Sinne*—which, equally *im üblen Sinne,* is also understandable in Arabic as *sāḥaqa.*

In her paper "Sara and the Hyena: Laughter, Menstruation, and the Genesis of a Double Entendre" (*Journal of the History of Religion* 36 no. 1 [Aug., 1996], pp. 13-41), Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych has studied the semantic and exegetical problem of the Arabic verb *ḍaḥika* in its qur'ānic occurrence (11:69-74) in the episode of "the laughter of Sara" and the analogical hermeneutics it suggests concerning the Hebrew *ẓ-ḥ-q* in the biblical story of Sara (Genesis 18:9-15).

46. Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh* 1:230.

47. This scene is chiefly according to Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah* 1:136.

48. The image of the black, overcast sky and the departure of Ṣāliḥ to Palestine is given in al-Nuwayrī's version of the story (*Nihāyat al-Arab* 13:85).

Chapter 3

1. See the antiposition of Badr and Uḥud precisely in such anthropologically definable ritual and tribal respects in S. Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals Speak*, pp. 199-205. This is already clearly reflected in al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh* 1:421-83 (Badr), 499-537 (Uḥud), 2:100-111 (Tabūk). In the latter, too, compare entries on Badr and Uḥud with the entry on Tabūk.

2. Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah* (Cairo) 4:1368-90.

3. Al-Wāqidī, *Maghāzī* 3:989-1025.

4. To this the Qur'ān refers in 9:49. In a similar vein is the story of the incontinence of the Andalusian Umayyad emir ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn al-Ḥakam, incidentally also as a *ghāzi[n]*, who during one of his campaigns to the "frontier" had a nightly discharge while dreaming of one of his concubines. Excited further by some pertinent *ṭayf al-khayāl* (nightly phantom) verses which he exchanged with one of his courtiers, he left the command of his army, mounted a horse and galloped from Guadalajara back to Cordova to satisfy his desires. Further celebratory verses on that "gallant" incident followed upon the emir's return. Such admission of intemperance, certainly among princes, was very much part of the culture of the time. See Ibn al-Qūṭīyah al-Qurṭubī, *Tārīkh Iftitāḥ al-Andalus* (Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 1868 [Arabic text]), p. 60.

5. Thus in Qur'ān 9:82.

6. Qur'ān 9:48; see Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah* (Cairo) 4:1371-77, 1402; and A. Guillaume, trans., *The Life of Muḥammad: A Translation of Isḥāq's Sīrat Rasūl Allāh* (Lahore and Karachi/London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1955 [1974]), p. 604 (henceforth cited as *Sīrah* [English]).

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